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## A NATIONAL DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH.

TO THE EDITOR OF SCIENCE—In the excellent article on 'The Progress and Achievements of Hygiene,' in your issue for November 26th, there is an error of omission which, whether intentional or not, should not be allowed to pass uncorrected in a journal so prominent as SCIENCE.'

On page 796 the writer says: "Since Congress has failed to act upon the President's repeated recommendation and the petitions of numerous medical societies for the creation of a National Health establishment, there is no good reason why the scope of duties and powers exercised by the Marine Hospital Service should not be enlarged;" making no allusion, whatever, to the comprehensive bill recently drawn up by the American Medical Association, to be urged before the present session of Congress.

The bill, as formulated, provides for an independent department, of which the Marine Hospital Service shall constitute, as it should, a subordinate bureau.

The conservation of the public health, considered even from a purely economical standpoint, is of national importance and should be relegated to no subordinate bureau with or without 'an advisory board.' To do so would be to postpone, perhaps for decades, the imperative and rational step which should be taken now.

The head of the new department ought to be made a cabinet adviser, but perhaps this may not be at present. If necessary, the Constitution can and will in time be altered to give it additional powers consonant with the requirements of modern sanitary science. To quote Dr. Girdner in the *North American Review* for the present month, what is needed is: "A unifying and supervising force in the national government which will direct, harmonize and render efficient the agencies of the various States."

C. H. PRESTON.

DAVENPORT, December 7, 1897.

## SCIENTIFIC LITERATURE.

*Habit and Instinct.* By C. LLOYD MORGAN.  
London, Edward Arnold. 1896. 8vo. Pp. 352.  
This is a work on comparative psychology

largely based on observations of bird life, and containing appropriate speculations concerning the origin and development of certain mental phenomena. The press work is excellent, the one illustration fair and the binding poor.

In the preface Professor Morgan makes a gracious allusion to those whom he met during his lecture tour, and he shows throughout the entire book an appreciation of, and a remarkable familiarity with, the work of American biologists. This may be due to the fact that 'Habit and Instinct' is the embodiment, in book form, of a series of lectures delivered in various university centers of the United States; but one experiences an exhilarating sensation of novelty in reading a book on modern biological problems which is neither supported by the legs of Lord Morton's mare nor infested with bob-tailed mice and epileptic guinea pigs.

First, defining his use of such terms as habit, instinct, reflex action, connate and deferred activities, automatism, etc., he divides the animal activities into those which are inherited and those which are acquired. From the biological point of view, habits are acquired activities of the individual, while instincts are congenital activities not characteristic of the individual alone, but of all the members of the group to which the individual belongs.

The first third of the book is largely descriptive of the habits of young birds and mammals, the birds in particular being selected from representative groups. The anecdotes are told in a most entertaining manner, but one fears that, as the embryologist drew many false conclusions from data supplied by the highly specialized meroblastic egg of the hen, so the comparative psychologist may be deceived by the data furnished by the highly specialized mental equipment of the bird. Though the observations would doubtless prove less entertaining, it is in the lower rather than in the higher vertebrates that one would search for the more simple and less involved mental phenomena. The anecdotes are generally pertinent, but a half page of speculation as to how a pig would jump out of a chair is neither instructive nor conclusive.

Having arranged his data, Professor Morgan really begins his work in the sixth chapter,